



Pewamo-Westphalia Community Schools

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Jason Mellema
Superintendent

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

August 30, 2013

Dear Sir/Madame,

I am writing today in response to the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking which, among other things, proposes changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to first thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

As a rural district in mid-Michigan, the E-Rate program has helped our district receive valuable discounts in the areas of telecommunications and internet connectivity. In today's world, it is expected that all students will not only understand how to use technology but also that they will be educated to be global citizens. Being involved in the E-Rate program is an important part to our district supporting the needs of our learners. I encourage legislators to expand this highly successful program and to continue supporting E-Rate in the future.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this NPRM, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works and that any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential. The current program, while needing some marginal updates to its structure, is most strained by increasing demand for E-Rate-supported services and persistently low funding. The single most effective step the FCC can take to bolster E-Rates current and future success is to provide \$5 billion in funding, an amount commensurate with current demand.

There are additional programmatic changes and restructuring that can provide additional efficiencies and savings. To rely solely on programmatic efficiencies, however, without providing additional new funding is a shortsighted solution, a policy that fails to address the program's most significant problem: inadequate funding.

I think this NPRM is an opportunity to tackle the important work of expanding a successful program. E-Rate is not a broken program that needs to be fixed; it is a successful program that schools and libraries continue to rely on, a program that must continue to provide funding critical for telecommunications and connectivity. The challenge is moving this program in the right direction to meet the needs of schools in the future, and ultimately, the businesses and communities these students will be directing. Schools need the finances to ensure that our students will have a high-level education to meet these demands, and increasing the funding levels to the E-Rate program is a crucial part of this.

Thank you for considering my response as you move forward with your decision on the E-Rate program. I applaud the FCC for its continued efforts to protect the already oversubscribed E-Rate program by ensuring the future of this successful program. I urge you to support significant increased funding for the E-Rate program, and to ensure that the program and its limited resources are protected and preserved.

Sincerely,

Jason Mellema, Superintendent
Pewamo-Westphalia Community Schools